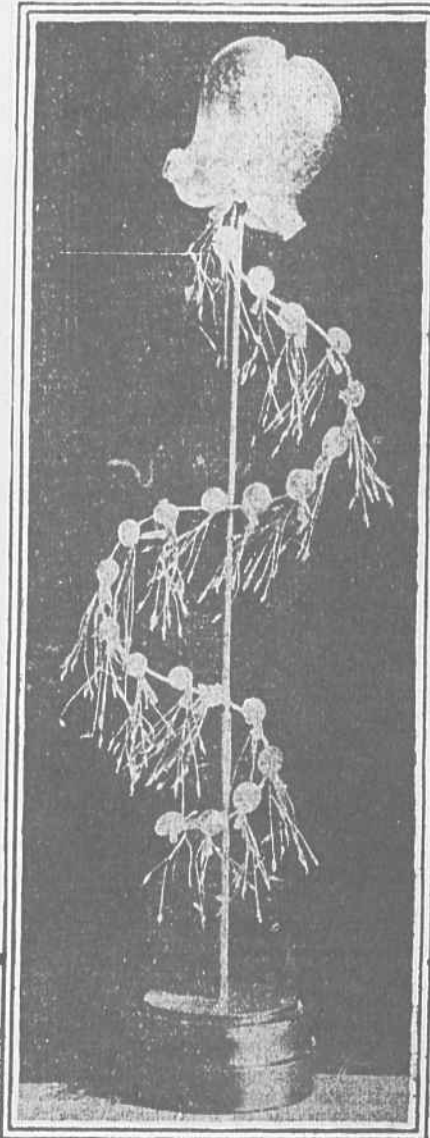


Hats Out of the Sea!

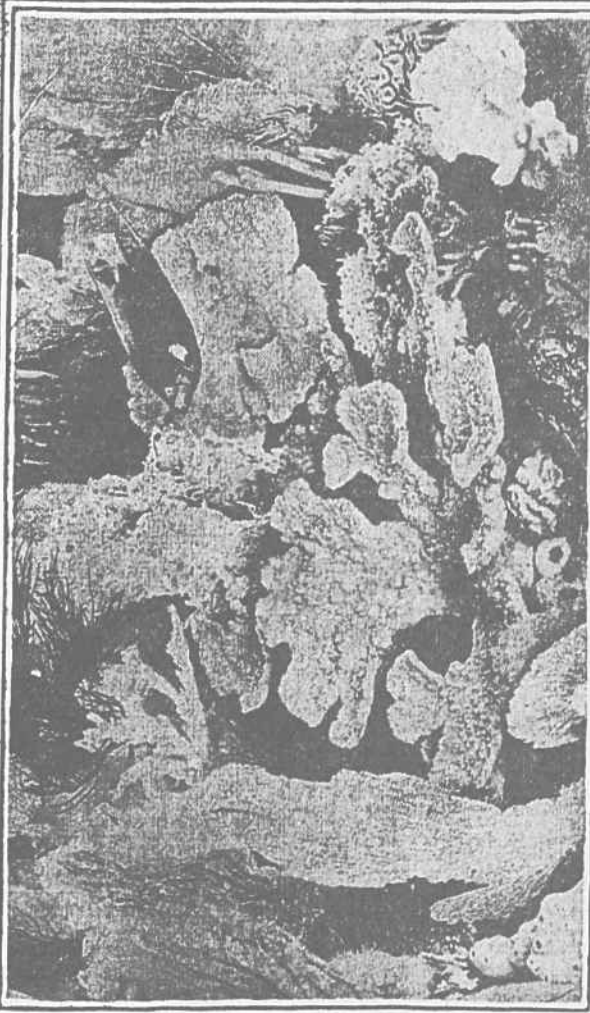
*How an Interesting Discovery
by the United States
Fisheries Bureau Has Given
a Sensational Impetus to
Millinery Enterprises.*



A Jelly-Fish
Plant Whose
Buds Become
Jelly-Fish.



Another Type of
Jelly-Fish Plant
Related to the
"Portuguese
Man-of-War."



Plant-Like Animals Frequently Suitable for Hat Decoration.

By Rene Bache

AND now, dear madam, how about a few jelly-fishes for your summer hat? Or perhaps for your autumn headgear? They are to be the mode.

Sounds like a joke, of course; but it isn't anything of the kind. If you are not inclined to take it seriously, write a line to the United States government fisheries bureau, and ask.

The fisheries bureau (at Washington) does not ordinarily concern itself with millinery matters. But here is an exceptional case. By merest accident it has come across an immense quantity of millinery supplies, of a kind highly esteemed in the trade, in Chesapeake bay.

For several years past the big wholesale millinery houses in New York, Baltimore, and other cities have been importing from Germany a sort of green stuff commonly called "sea moss," very pretty in itself, and suitable for trimming hats, especially in combination with artificial flowers. They have brought it over by hundreds of tons annually.

The European war stopped these imports. And now the fisheries bureau has ascertained that there was never any good reason for getting the stuff from abroad, because it is vastly more plentiful along our own sea coast than in European waters, and (what is more important) the American product is far superior.

But what, it will be asked, has this to do with jelly-fishes? The answer is: Everything in the world. For the material in question is not really sea moss at all. It is not a plant. It is an animal—or, more accurately speaking, colonies of animals. As it grows in the water, it looks like a plant. It develops buds—such being its method of reproduction. The buds, when "ripe," drop off and proceed to shift for themselves. They are little jelly-fishes.

Everybody who visits the seashore in the summer time is familiar with jelly-fishes. They are among the most curiously interesting of animals. They contain more water in proportion to their bulk than any other living creatures. In fact, they are 99 per cent, sea-water. If placed on a fresh sheet of blotting paper, or any other clean surface, and left for a few hours, hardly a trace of the jelly-fish will remain. Nothing but a slight stain. "Animated sea-water" is the jelly-fish—to quote an eminent naturalist.

For some years past the fisheries bureau has been making a study of the jelly-fish "plant" in our own waters. It has found the stuff in immense "beds" all along the Atlantic coast from Maine to Florida—everywhere of a quality superior to the imported article. But it was only the other day that one of its exploring steamers, the Fish Hawk, came upon an area of the Chesapeake bottom that yields, in quantity practically inexhaustible, a variety that far surpasses in beauty anything of the kind hitherto known.

Here, it would seem, is the destined source of supply for the American millinery trade from this time on. That industry can draw upon it indefinitely, so long as fashion demands the material for the decoration of hats. The stuff is exquisite in its arborescent texture, and, when dried and dyed, is delicately soft and pliable.

The recent studies made by the fisheries bureau have disclosed the fact that there are other species of "jelly-fish plants" which may be equally or even more useful. There is, for example, the plumifera, or "plume-bearer," the name of which is sufficiently descriptive.

Another is the bougainvillea—called after the flower of that name, because of its bell-shaped buds, which in due time drop off the parent stem as full-fledged jelly-fishes.

Most beautiful of all, however, is the "ostrich plume," delicate and elegant, which is found plentifully along the Pacific coast. It is wonderfully like an ostrich feather, in miniature. Nobody seems ever to have thought of utilizing it in any way, yet for the adornment of hats (if suitably dried and dyed) it would be most valuable.

The so-called "sea moss," imported from Germany, has been largely utilized for purposes other than the manufacture of millinery. It is used in quantities for hanging baskets, being "warranted" not to die or "lose its natural color." This is no idle or untruthful claim; for it cannot die, inasmuch as it is already dead when imported, and, being dyed a "fast green," it cannot fade.



Dr. Hugh M. Smith, Chief of
the U. S. Fisheries Bureau.